A. Background and Definitions

Niagara College believes its employees and students are its most valuable asset and is committed to providing a healthy environment and assisting employees and students in maintaining good health and providing support to those suffering from an allergy to latex.

**Latex Allergy:** Latex allergy is a sensitized immune response (i.e. become latex sensitive) to latex protein antigens found in natural rubber latex products.

Clinical findings may depend on the sensitivity of the patient, the route of exposure and the quantity of the antigen in the product:

a) **Type IV** (contact dermatitis, often delayed) redness, swelling, papules, itching, eczema. A person may have a sensitivity to latex chemicals that manifests itself as contact dermatitis. However, when the latex product comes into contact with mucous membranes, the same individual may have an anaphylactic reaction.

b) **Type I** (systemic, immediate) urticaria, rhinitis, conjunctivitis, asthma, hypertension, angioedema, bronchospasm, nausea, vomiting, shock/cardiac arrest.

Routes of exposure to natural rubber latex products that have resulted in dermatitis and/or systemic reactions include:

a) cutaneous,

b) mucous membrane,

c) inhalation,

d) internal tissue,

e) intravenous, and

f) indirect contact.

Persons at greater risk for the development of latex allergy include:

a) Any student or employee with frequent or prolonged medical or occupational exposure:

   i. spina bifida, myelodysplasia or genito-urinary birth defects;

   ii. multiple surgeries or procedures;

   iii. daily bladder and bowel care;

   iv. health care workers;

   v. other occupational exposure.
b) Any student or employee with an allergy history, especially of asthma and/or other environmental allergies.

c) Any student or employee with food allergies including, but not limited to, bananas, avocados, kiwi fruit, chestnuts, potatoes, tomatoes, peaches, grapes, cherry, pineapple and papaya.

d) Any student or employee with unexplained anaphylaxis during surgery or other invasive procedures.

e) Any student or employee with irritant or contact dermatitis especially to latex chemicals in gloves.

Latex precautions are used for students and employees of Niagara College at high risk for an allergic reaction to a natural rubber latex product and include:

a) Latex-free alternate products in the work environment. Latex gloves will not be permitted for use at Niagara College.

b) If equipment cannot be removed or replacements cannot be found, cover latex portion of equipment to prevent direct contact.

B. Purpose

To identify any Niagara College students or employees with known latex allergies, or those at risk of a latex allergy or reaction. To provide a safe environment that minimizes the risk of exposure to latex.

C. Practice Statements

1. If a qualified practitioner determines a student/employee is latex sensitive/allergic, they must submit in writing suggested accommodations for consideration. Student requests for accommodations should be submitted to the Niagara College Centre for Students with Disabilities Office. Suggested accommodations for employees shall be submitted to the Health and Safety and Human Resources departments.

2. The student or employee will then need to inform each faculty/ instructor or supervisor of recommended accommodations at the initial contact and whenever the use of latex containing equipment may be involved in cases where a substitute does not exist or is not practical.

3. Latex gloves and or latex balloons are not permitted at Niagara College without approval from the Manager of Health and Safety.

4. Utilize the following tools to assist in implementation of this practice:

   a) Use appropriate work practices to reduce the chance of reactions to latex through elimination or substitution and/or alternative work assignments.

   b) Practice good housekeeping: frequently clean areas and equipment that may become contaminated with latex containing dust as well as identify the source of the latex dust for removal from site.
PRACTICE TITLE:  Latex

c) Learn to recognize symptoms of latex allergy.
d) Niagara College recommends wearing a medical alert bracelet/necklace that identifies this or other allergies/reactions.

D. Related Documents and Links

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: http://www.cdc.gov/

National Institutes of Occupational Safety and Health: Preventing Allergic Reactions to Natural Rubber Latex in the Workplace: http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/97-135/


Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS): http://www.ccohs.ca/